

Testimony of John Saccu
Director, Derby Bureau of Youth Services

***H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

*February 23 2017 Appropriations Subcommittee on Health Public Hearing
Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, Regional Action Council Funding*

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Senator Markley, Representative Dillon and members of the Appropriations Subcommittee, my name is John Saccu and I am Director of Derby Bureau of Youth Services. I am here today to strongly oppose the grave cuts to regional action councils that will decimate the current prevention network structure.

The Alliance for Prevention & Wellness formerly known as, the Greater Valley Substance Abuse Action Council partners with almost every entity in the communities they serve. They work to create linkages and partnerships to reduce substance abuse, suicide, and promote and improve mental health. We rely on their expertise and data driven planning that assists us in closing gaps in services and creating healthy communities.

In the past year they have provided us and the school system with numerous trainings that has helped build our expertise and skills in addressing the issues among students. For example they have provided Mental Health First Aid, suicide prevention, Drug Trends and Red Watch trainings to both adults and youth. In addition, they have provided consultation on curriculum and technical assistance in developing substance abuse education to our student population.

In addition Regional Action Councils work in collaboration with Youth Bureaus in the area of Juvenile Justice and the States continued initiative to "Raise the Age". They provide critical mandated education in the areas of substance use education and with the process of early identification and referral of kids who present with signs of possible addiction. The Action Council serves on the Juvenile Review Board and is a valuable member in the effort concerning diversion of kids from the court system. These are all major initiatives put forth by the State and both the Youth Bureaus and Regional Action Councils are vital to the continued success in providing critical services as well as saving money. In doing so this collaboration creates efficient cost saving services for the State in areas of major concern in our communities.

Both agencies work in lock- step with the States initiatives in prevention, juvenile justice and mental health and in addition both provide critical data to the legislature helping to facilitate cost savings and prioritizing of program funding.

If we did not have the Alliance for Prevention & Wellness in our community, we would not have

localized data. They provide the student survey and regional data profiles that we rely on to leverage additional funding from both federal and state sources.

We urge you to reject the severe budget cuts to regional action councils and keep in place the current funding structure.

Respectfully Submitted,

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